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**Working Profile: Rep. Ed Zschau of California**

## A Skeptical View From the World of High Tech

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WASHINGTON, July 25 — It is, at a glance, the typical freshman legislator's office. The blotters on the desks are new, the walls blank, the shelves nearly empty. But there, on a shelf in Representative Ed Zschau's office, a framed picture is posted against the wall. It is a portrait of Albert Einstein.

Of the 173 lawyers, 107, businessmen, and 17 ranchers and farmers in the House the voters of the 12th District of California have added their brand of Representative. Mr. Zschau, the Republican Congressman from the Silicon Valley, is a computer scientist.

When you cross a politician and a computer scientist, this is what you get," said Representative Gerry Conaway of Minnesota, the Democrats' House whip. "He's not just a computer scientist. He's very much a politician."

Mr. Zschau (his name is pronounced like the first syllable of "power") has attracted unusual attention for a freshman member of the House, a body that ordinarily uses the legislatures, the county courts, and the local bar associations as farm teams. But now, when high technology is the buzzword of the season, Mr. Zschau, the first member of the House to come from the world of computer technology, has emerged as the etching of a celebrity.

### Playing a Skeptic's Role

Mr. Zschau, who is 43 years old, is a surprise as well. He is, of course, almost evangelistic on the subject of high technology, the world of bits and bytes and RAMs and chips. But, if anything, Mr. Zschau sought to be a skeptic on Capitol Hill, trying to cool the ardor of some of his colleagues who think that all the magic of the American economy can be achieved through a high-tech gasp of robotics and random access computer memories.

Maintaining our technological leadership is important, but the expectations for it in the economy are unrealistic," he said. "It's still a small part of our overall society. People who say we're going to be a tech society and that we should get out of the smokestack industry are Pollyannas. Powerful computer, genetic engineering, robotics — all have glamour. But they're a very small part of our economy."

At the other end of the Capitol, Senator Frank R. Lautenberg, one of the leaders of Automatic Data Process-



Representative Ed Zschau, in his office with portrait of Einstein.

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ing Inc., offers a different perspective on high technology, that of a businessman whose data processing operations were transformed by the development of the computer.

"We come at high technology from different ends," the New Jersey Republican said of himself and Mr. Zschau, "but we can make an enormous difference here. It's one thing to have read about high technology, but it's another thing to have lived through it."

Mr. Zschau grew up just outside Omaha, attending a school so small that three grades were taught in one room. Before he was a teen-ager he announced to the world, or at least to his neighborhood, that he intended to be a physicist. Then he set about examining the mysteries of electronics, flashing lights and buzzers at first and then the more sophisticated workings of electric motors.

He went off to Princeton, majoring

in philosophy but taking heavy doses of mathematics and physics, eventually finding himself attending, and then teaching at, the Stanford Business School. It was a lovely life for a young married man, a West Coast idyll of research, touch football and strolling the campus with his young children.

But before long he grew restless. "I wondered whether I really knew anything about business," he said. "I was teaching people how to be a chief executive officer and I was wondering if I knew how to be a chief executive officer myself."

He founded his own company, System Industries, and in Milpitas, Calif., once orchard and dairy country, he set out manufacturing high-performance memory systems for computers. Twice the company almost went bankrupt, but in 1982, the year he ran for Congress, System Industries was publicly traded, had 550 employees and

\$75 million in sales.

"He's one of the very few people who would be willing to leave a multimillion-dollar company and a very high life in California to serve the country," said former Representative Paul N. McCloskey, the California Republican whose seat Mr. Zschau occupies. "He's in a situation not a freshman; that I know is troubling. The only thing that is distressing is that he might get frustrated all."

Today Mr. Zschau's battles are fought in committee rooms rather than in board rooms and family lounges. He was a co-sponsor of a nuclear freeze resolution and House Foreign Affairs Committee accepted his amendment putting greater emphasis on arms reduction. He added five amendments to the Export Administration Act, which imposed export controls on certain products for national security reasons.

### Eschews the Party Circuit

"He's the star of our freshman class," said Representative Leach of Iowa, who played rugby with him at Princeton. "By background and potential he is far and away the most promising member of our class. How many people around here have had two successful careers?"

Thus far Mr. Zschau has developed an unusual political style. He returned to his California district almost every weekend and has held nearly 70 meetings this year. He does not ride in limousines or attend spaghetti dinners. He eschews both ends of the Capitol Hill-Georgetown party axis, refusing to pause over petits fours to discuss the virtues of tax-exempt mortgage revenue bonds with lobbyists.

"I have a rule: I don't go out at night in Washington," he said. "People say you have to do it. I say I don't. I'm either in the office or home. But I don't go to parties. I don't accomplish anything at them. If someone wants to talk to me, they can call in during the day. You get a lot done faster."

Mr. Zschau's staff expects him to run for re-election but he is not likely to become a fixture in Congress. That also is not his style.

"I don't think of this as my last career," he said. "I don't know how long I'll be here, but I do know there will be a time for me to let someone else work. I'm enthusiastic and naive make a contribution. Getting re-elected doesn't obsess me. I feel very free to make decisions and, well, that's that. I do feel a need to be here."